

VZCZCXRO9664  
PP RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHNP RUEHROV RUEHSR  
DE RUEHRL #1684/01 3531255  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 181255Z DEC 08  
FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2879  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE  
RUCNFRG/FRG COLLECTIVE  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 0573  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BERLIN 001684

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/17/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [EUN](#) [SR](#) [GM](#) [KS](#) [BK](#) [MK](#) [SI](#)

SUBJECT: GERMANY PLEASED WITH EULEX LAUNCH; CONCERNED ABOUT BOSNIA, MACEDONIA

REF: A. BERLIN 1475

[1](#)B. BERLIN 1636

Classified By: Deputy Political Minister Counselor Stan Otto for reason  
s: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: PolOff met with German MFA Office Director for the Western Balkans Jutta Schmitz December 12 to discuss her thoughts on progress in Serbia and Kosovo, including the successful launch of the EULEX mission, and concerns about the latest developments in Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. She noted the generally positive trends in Serbia and Kosovo, and expressed concern about the slow pace of reform in Macedonia and the lack of progress in Bosnia. Schmitz also discussed opportunities to liberalize visa requirements for travelers from all three countries during [1](#)2009. END SUMMARY.

EULEX OFF TO A GOOD START; SERBIA MOVING FORWARD  
-----

[1](#)2. (C) With the successful launch of EULEX December 9, Schmitz expressed satisfaction with how the transfer had occurred, and with how both governments and the "man on the street" were reacting to the deployment. "No news is good news," she noted, echoing statements from other Quint member countries. Schmitz highlighted dramatically-improved relations with the new Serbian government, noting that Serb FM Jeremic, on a December 6 visit to Berlin to attend an Aspen Institute conference, expressed to MFA State Minister Gernot Erler his hope that "2009 would be Serbia's 'EU Year.'" In a sign of thawing relations, Berlin's Aspen Institute head King Mallory reported that, during the conference, Jeremic and Kosovo FM Skender Hyseni "sought each other out" and had a private conversation on the margins.

[1](#)3. (C) Schmitz reported that Jeremic mentioned his hope that the EU Interim Agreement would come into force in 2009, and that visa liberalization could also be achieved. Schmitz emphasized that these goals were "quite ambitious," but added that it's "important that such ambition exists." She noted that the government's political hand has strengthened in Serbia, and that the country's economy is expected to grow in 2009 (despite the global financial crisis) as companies' faith in Serbia as a good investment opportunity has increased.

[1](#)4. (C) In a December 17 meeting with the Charge d'Affaires, Slovene CdA Alenka Jerak noted that stability and a Euro-Atlantic perspective in Serbia must remain the focus for [1](#)2009. "Much of the Serb political class recognize that Kosovo is 'lost' and that pre-accession financial aid can help move Serbia away from its difficult past," she noted. She also said that problems in Bosnia caused by the

leadership of the Republika Srpska (RS) should also diminish as the situation in Serbia stabilizes. Belgrade, she declared, "remains the heart of the Balkans." The Charge agreed, but pressed the need for Mladic to be turned over to ICTY.

#### BOSNIA REMAINS TROUBLESOME

-----

15. (C) Schmitz expressed deeper concern about the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. While the situation remains generally stable, "there's not much positive to report from Sarajevo." Currently, 140 German soldiers are in Bosnia as part of the ALTHEA EUFOR deployment. While things are quiet on the ground ("The soldiers do little except play cards" joked Schmitz), she stressed that it is premature to talk about ending the mission before the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina (OHR) is closed. She agreed that without a EUFOR presence, the OHR's claim to Bonn powers would lose all credibility. In 2009, Schmitz said, the international community must focus high-level interest on Bosnia to quell ethnic tensions. The Croatian "Inter-Cantonal Council," she said, "is yet another worrisome example" of an ethnic group working at cross-purposes with Dayton's intent. RS leader Dodik, she sighed, "is not the only problem in Bosnia."

16. (C) Janek agreed that the situation in Bosnia is "not good" and that the three ethnic groups are doing little to solve national problems. Still, she urged that EU visa liberalization be offered to Bosnia as well next year if

BERLIN 00001684 002 OF 002

other Balkan countries are included. If not, only the Bosniaks would be left outside the liberalization regime as most Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs hold dual-citizenship and will thus be eligible to travel. This sort of "ghettoisation" would be counter-productive and should be avoided if at all possible.

#### MACEDONIA STAGNANT

-----

17. (C) With elections expected in mid-2009, Schmitz noted, the chance of seeing political progress in Macedonia seems slim. She also added that the chance to resolve the name issue in the months before the next NATO Summit in April appears even slimmer as a result of the political turmoil in Greece. Schmitz expressed great dissatisfaction with the pace of reform in Macedonia and accused the GoM of using the name dispute as an excuse for the slow pace. When told of reports that journalists and NGOs in Macedonia are under increased government pressure and scrutiny, Schmitz promised to press the German Embassy in Skopje to look into this matter. Macedonia, she pointed out, "cannot just give lip service to the Western values of rule of law and civil society; it also needs to act according to these values."

18. (C) Both Schmitz and Janek noted that Macedonia is the most deserving recipient for EU visa liberalization among the Balkan countries. Both also noted that German Interior Minister Schaeuble has traditionally opposed liberalization; however Schmitz added that he recently met with an official Macedonian delegation where he demonstrated a greater willingness to consider visa liberalization. As Schmitz stated, this could "help create change in these societies from below. We now have nearly 20 years during which the peoples of the Balkans could not travel, could see the rest of Europe.

#### GERMAN POLITICAL COOPERATION

-----

19. (C) With German parliamentary elections scheduled for September 2009, Schmitz said she expects cooperation between the Social Democratic Party-led MFA and the Christian

Democratic Union-led Chancellery on Balkans issues to continue to be excellent. When asked about any visits to the region that FM Steinmeier may have planned, Schmitz admitted that any trips could be difficult as Steinmeier is the SPD Chancellor candidate. She did note, however, that he is being encouraged to become more heavily engaged in Bosnia, given the growing problems there, and that an official visit to that country cannot be precluded.

Koenig